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SUBJECT: SERBIA: APPLICATION FOR FY 2008 PRM JULIA V. TAFT FUND TO
ASSIST ELDERLY REFUGEES IN EASTERN SERBIA

REF: STATE: 6779

Summary

¶1. (U) Embassy Belgrade proposes granting \$20,000 of the FY 2008 PRM Julia V. Taft Fund for Refugees to the Kucevo Home for Elderly in eastern Serbia to install an elevator. The project fills a critical assistance gap in Serbia and will enable an appropriate facility to shelter an additional 30 elderly members of a highly vulnerable and underserved refugee population. Post developed this project in consultation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Serbia. End summary.

The Institution and Beneficiaries

¶2. (U) The Home for the Elderly in eastern Serbia's Kucevo municipality is the largest converted collective center for refugees in the country. It currently hosts 120 vulnerable senior citizens, 80 of whom are refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The collective center was converted in 2002 into a home for the elderly under the auspices UNHCR, the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy, and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees. The facility is the only one of its kind in Serbia that accommodates and accepts elderly refugees from across Serbia. The municipality (population 5,000) hosted approximately 700 refugees from Croatia and Bosnia during the height of the Balkan conflict. The center receives financial support from the Ministry of Labor, which provides salaries for all the employees (including medical staff, social workers, cooks, and custodian) and the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees, which provides 20,000 RSD to the center for each refugee it houses.

¶3. (U) The home currently houses residents primarily on the first two floors of its three-story building. Only a handful of ambulatory residents reside on the third floor, which is only reachable by stairs. The eldest resident is 102 years old.

Project Description

¶4. (U) We propose to install an elevator in the residence. Installation of an elevator in this three-story facility would allow the home both to accommodate an additional 30 elderly individuals, expanding the total resident population to 150, and to improve the quality of life of all residents. In addition to allowing the center to accommodate residents on the third floor, an elevator would enable residents, including those confined to wheelchairs on upper floors, to go outdoors during the day.

¶5. (U) Post will implement the project through Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CRS has agreed to implement the project without charging customary administrative fees. We hope to use the USG funds to leverage contributions from other donors to support this institution. (Note: We have had considerable success with similar

efforts. In FY 2007 we applied \$12,000 in Ambassador's funding toward the purchase of basic household equipment and educational materials for a protection facility for children and at-risk adolescents in Belgrade. We successfully leveraged \$34,000 in additional assistance for the facility from the City of Belgrade, Norwegian telecommunications provider Telenor and the Vlade Divac Humanitarian Organization.) In the event that PRM grants less than \$20,000 and we are unable to raise sufficient external funds to implement the project, we will apply the funds toward medical supplies for the care and maintenance of residents at the elderly home.

Comment

16. (U) This project demonstrates USG commitment to address social inclusion of refugees and other vulnerable groups in need of protection. The effort is consistent with past proposals in previous funding years. End Comment.

MUNTER